

# IDAHO STATE JOURNAL

## March 21, 2006

### Clinic owners facing fraud charges

By [Casey Santee](#)

Journal Writer

POCATELLO - The owners of a defunct mental health clinic here will be arraigned today in Federal District Court for allegedly defrauding Medicaid of more than \$100,000 during an 18- month period beginning in Sept. 2001.

This is the third case of alleged Medicaid fraud to surface in Southeastern Idaho in as many months. Previously, Medicaid began investigating the owners of Achieving a Better Life in Chubbuck and Teton Family Services in Pocatello on similar charges.

Melissa Gross, co-owner of the now defunct S.E.R.V.E., LLC, is charged with 69 counts of fraud for making false statements to authorities, submitting false documents and filing fictitious claims for reimbursement, according to the indictment.

Her partner, Kim Ward, is charged with failing to report Gross' actions. If convicted of the charges, Gross faces up to 10 years in prison and \$250,000 on each count. Ward could serve up to 3 years behind bars if found guilty.

"These types of Medicaid fraud charges are fairly common, but they are usually filed in Boise because there are more people on that side of the state," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Mallard.

Mallard said Gross and Ward sold S.E.R.V.E., LLC, which shut down in 2003.

Gross and Ward could not be reached for comment Monday.

Medicaid revoked Achieving a Better Life's provider agreement after employee and unlicensed counselor Michelle Bott-Graham was charged in the death of 2-year-old Cameron Hamilton. Bott-Graham allegedly picked Cameron up from ABL, 265 E. Chubbuck, for autism counseling at her Pocatello home and returned him to the clinic "unresponsive." He died at a Utah hospital less than a week later.

While the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare said it is investigating ABL owners Vickie Stauffer and Randie Wilhelm for fraud, no charges have yet been filed. ABL is now closed and Wilhelm and Stauffer are excluded from participating in any Medicaid programs for at least 10 years.

Teton Family Services, 1030 E. Sublette St., was shut down earlier this month for employing unqualified staff to provide clinical services to Medicaid clients. While a fraud investigation is underway in this case as well, no charges have been filed in this case either.

Health and Welfare officials declined to comment about Gross and Ward Monday, instead referring their cases to U.S. Attorneys.

---

*This document was originally published online on Tuesday, March 21, 2006*